

- Prep Time: 15 minutes
- Cook Time: 45 minutes
- Total Time: 1 hour
- Servings: 6 main course portions (or 8 appetizer portions)
- Recipe Intensity: Low-Medium
 - Knife Work Intensity: Medium (peeling and cubing winter squash requires a steady hand and a sharp chef's knife).
 - Cooking Technique Intensity: Low (roasting, simmering, and immersion blending).
 - Equipment Needed: Large rimmed baking sheet, heavy-bottomed Dutch oven or stockpot, high-powered blender or immersion blender.

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Ingredients

For Roasting:

- 1 large butternut squash (about 3 to 3.5 lbs), peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon fine sea salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

For the Soup Base:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter (or olive oil for a vegan option)
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
- 2 large carrots, peeled and sliced into rounds
- 2 ribs celery, finely diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon fresh sage leaves, finely chopped (plus extra whole leaves for garnish)
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth (or chicken broth for non-vegetarians)
- ½ cup heavy cream (or full-fat canned coconut milk for dairy-free)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons pure maple syrup or honey (optional, to balance acidity and enhance natural sweetness)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice (to brighten the finished dish)

Optional Garnishes:

- A drizzle of heavy cream or coconut milk
- Roasted pumpkin seeds (pepitas)
- Crisp fried sage leaves
- Freshly cracked black pepper

Step-by-Step Instructions

Step 1: Roast the Squash

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F (200°C) and line a large baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place the cubed butternut squash onto the baking sheet.
3. Drizzle with 2 tablespoons of extra-virgin olive oil, then toss with sea salt, black pepper, cinnamon, and nutmeg until every cube is evenly coated.
4. Spread the squash out in a single layer. Ensure the pieces are not overcrowded so they roast rather than steam.

5. Roast in the oven for 30 to 35 minutes, flipping halfway through, until the squash is fork-tender and slightly golden-brown along the edges.

Step 2: Build the Flavor Base

1. While the squash finishes roasting, melt the butter (or heat olive oil) in a large Dutch oven or stockpot over medium heat.
2. Add the diced yellow onion, carrots, and celery. Sauté for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables soften and the onion turns translucent.
3. Add the minced garlic, chopped sage, and thyme leaves. Sauté for another 1 to 2 minutes until intensely fragrant, taking care not to burn the garlic.

Step 3: Simmer the Ingredients

1. Transfer the warm, roasted butternut squash directly from the baking sheet into the pot with the aromatic vegetables.
2. Pour in the vegetable broth, making sure it mostly covers the vegetables.
3. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, then reduce the heat to low, cover the pot with a lid, and let it simmer for 10 to 12 minutes to allow the flavors to meld.

Step 4: Blend to Silky Smoothness

1. Remove the pot from heat.
2. If using an immersion blender: Place the wand directly into the pot and blend on medium-high intensity until completely smooth and velvety.
3. If using a countertop blender: Allow the soup to cool slightly. Working in batches, transfer the soup into the blender jar. *Caution:* Remove the center cap of the blender lid and cover it with a folded kitchen towel to allow steam to escape while blending on high speed. Return the smooth soup to the pot.

Step 5: Finish and Season

1. Stir the heavy cream (or coconut milk) and maple syrup into the warm blended soup over low heat.
2. Stir in the fresh lemon juice to bring out the vibrant flavor profile.
3. Taste the soup and adjust the seasoning with additional salt, pepper, or nutmeg as needed. If the soup is too thick for your preference, add extra warm broth $\frac{1}{4}$ cup at a time until the desired consistency is achieved.

Step 6: Garnish and Serve

1. Ladle the hot soup into warm bowls.

2. Swirl a splash of heavy cream or coconut milk over the top.
3. Sprinkle with roasted pepitas, fresh black pepper, and crisp sage leaves for texture and visual appeal. Serve immediately alongside warm, crusty bread.

Recipe Storage & Meal Prep Tips

- **Refrigeration:** Store cooled leftover soup in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Reheat gently over medium-low heat on the stovetop.
- **Freezing:** This soup freezes exceptionally well! For best results, freeze the soup *before* adding the heavy cream or dairy. Allow the soup to cool completely, transfer it to freezer-safe glass jars or silicon bags, and freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw in the refrigerator overnight and stir in the cream while reheating.

Nutritional Information

(Calculated per serving based on 6 equal portions using heavy cream and vegetable broth)

Nutritional Parameter	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value*
Calories	230 kcal	—
Total Fat	11 g	14%
<i>Saturated Fat</i>	<i>5 g</i>	25%
<i>Trans Fat</i>	<i>0 g</i>	—
Cholesterol	25 mg	8%
Sodium	520 mg	23%
Total Carbohydrate	32 g	12%
<i>Dietary Fiber</i>	<i>5 g</i>	18%

Nutritional Parameter	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value*
<i>Total Sugars</i>	<i>11 g</i>	—
Protein	3 g	6%
Vitamin A	420 mcg RAE	290%
Vitamin C	35 mg	40%
Calcium	110 mg	8%
Iron	1.8 mg	10%
Potassium	680 mg	14%